

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 06658 01 OF 02 251545Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----251552Z 109883 /44

O P 251223Z APR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3011  
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY GABORONE PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY LAGOS PRIORITY  
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN PRIORITY  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 06658

EXDIS

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1  
TAGS: PFOR, RH, UK  
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: SITHOLE OBJECTS TO US COSPONSORSHIP

SUMMARY: SITHOLE HAS EXPRESSED HIS OBJECTIONS TO US  
COSPONSORSHIP OF A CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE BECAUSE  
A) IT INVITES EXPANDING SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN RHODESIAN  
AFFAIRS AND B) IT MAKES WESTERN PUPPETS OUT OF WHOMEVER  
ATTENDS THE CONFERENCE. SITHOLE IS TROUBLED NOT SO MUCH  
BY AMERICAN COSPONSORSHIP, IF THAT ONLY MEANS STRONG  
AMERICAN ENDORSEMENT, AS BY THE EFFECT CREATED BY DIRECT  
AMERICAN PARTICIPATION AT THE CONFERENCE TABLE.  
END SUMMARY

1. EMBASSY OFFICER SAW NDABANINGI SITHOLE APRIL 23 AT  
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PAGE 02 LONDON 06658 01 OF 02 251545Z

LONDON'S STRAND PALACE HOTEL A FEW DOORS DOWN FROM THE  
VACANT RHODESIA HOUSE. MEETING WAS AT SITHOLE'S REQUEST.  
SITHOLE BEGAN WITH A DESCRIPTION OF BRITAIN'S EFFORTS  
OVER THE YEARS TO SOLVE THE RHODESIA CRISIS. ONCE THE UK  
HAD SURRENDERED THE OPTION OF USING FORCE AGAINST IAN  
SMITH, HE SAID, IT HAD ALSO SURRENDERED ITS CAPACITY TO  
CONTROL THE SITUATION. BUT ALL THAT HAS NOW CHANGED, HE

WENT ON, BECAUSE THE POWER OF THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN ATTACHED TO THE POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY OF GREAT BRITAIN. SITHOLE SAID HE WELCOMED THIS IMPORTANT AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT. NOT ONLY DOES THE US GIVE PROMISE TO THE EVENTUAL LIBERATION OF RHODESIA BUT IT ALSO COUNTERS THE GROWING SOVIET INFLUENCE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.

2. HAVING LAID HIS GROUND WORK, SITHOLE THEN SAID THAT WHILE WELCOMING A US ROLE IN THE SEARCH FOR A SETTLEMENT HE CANNOT POLITICALLY ACCEPT US COSPONSORSHIP OF A CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE. AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IS VITAL, HE REITERATED, BUT FORMAL COSPONSORSHIP IS OUT OF THE QUESTION FOR TWO REASONS. FIRST, IT ONLY ENCOURAGES AND LEGITIMIZES THE SOVIET INTERFERENCE IN SOUTHERN AFRICAN AFFAIRS; IT JUSTIFIES BIG POWER RIVALRY. SECOND, THOSE WHO ATTEND SUCH A CONFERENCE ARE OPEN TO THE ACCUSATION THAT THEY ARE WESTERN PUPPETS. US COSPONSORSHIP WEAKENS THE POSITION OF THE MODERATES AND TARNISHES THEM AS THE INSTRUMENTS OF AMERICAN WILL.

3. THE OWEN PLAN IS EXCELLENT, SITHOLE SAID, BUT US COSPONSORSHIP "IS GOING TO SPOIL WHAT IS OTHERWISE A GOOD IDEA." RHODESIA IS PART OF THE THIRD WORLD, SITHOLE CONTINUED, AND "WE MUST APPEAR TO BE OUR OWN MASTERS." THE FORMAL PROCESS OF DECOLONIZATION SHOULD THEREFORE FOLLOW THE TRADITIONAL FORMAT, AND THE NATIONALIST PARTIES MUST DEAL DIRECTLY AND ONLY WITH BRITAIN. THIS UNUSUAL AMERICAN COSPONSORSHIP "WOULD

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PAGE 03 LONDON 06658 01 OF 02 251545Z

DO US MORE HARM THAN GOOD."

4. EMBASSY OFFICER EXPLAINED THE BROAD AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR THE OWEN INITIATIVE AND OUR WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE CLOSELY WITH THE BRITISH EFFORT. HMG IS OPERATING FROM A NARROW POLITICAL BASE AND WITHOUT US COSPONSORSHIP BRITAIN WILL VERY LIKELY BE UNABLE TO OFFER ANY CONFERENCE AT ALL. ASKED WHETHER HIS OBJECTIONS TO US COSPONSORSHIP INCLUDED DIRECT US PARTICIPATION IN THE CONFERENCE, SITHOLE NODDED. HE WENT ON TO EXPLAIN THAT THE US COULD "BLESS" THE CONFERENCE, COULD ESTABLISH A LARGE, HIGH LEVEL DELEGATION, COULD GIVE PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT, BUT IN THE END COULD NOT ACTUALLY PARTICIPATE IN THE NEGOTIATIONS THEMSELVES. "LET THE WORLD KNOW THAT THE CONFERENCE IS PART OF AN ANQLO-AMERICAN PLAN--AFTER ALL AMERICA IS A FACT OF LIFE--BUT THE AMERICANS CANNOT SIT AT THE TABLE."

5. SITHOLE WAS ASKED, ASSUMING THERE WOULD BE A BILATERA

PHASE BEFORE A CONFERENCE, WHETHER US AND UK AMBAS-

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PAGE 01 LONDON 06658 02 OF 02 251541Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----251559Z 109841 /44

O P 251223Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3012

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY GABORONE PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 06658

EXDIS

SADORS SHOULD JOINTLY SEE FRONT LINE PRESIDENTS WHEN  
THE NEED AROSE. SITHOLE SAID YES, BUT NATIONALIST  
LEADERS SHOULD BE APPROACHED BY US AND UK REPRESENTA-  
TIVES WORKING INDIVIDUALLY.

6. SITHOLE DOES NOT PLAN TO PUBLICIZE IMMEDIATELY HIS  
OBJECTIONS TO US COSPONSORSHIP. HE WILL INFORM HMG OF  
HIS OBJECTIONS EARLY THIS WEEK.

7. COMMENT: SITHOLE WAS CONCERNED THAT HIS DISAGREEMENT  
WITH US COSPONSORSHIP SHOULD NOT BE CONSTRUED AS ANTI-  
AMERICAN, ALTHOUGH HE IS PROBABLY LESS TROUBLED BY  
GREAT POWER RIVALRY THAN BY THE IMMEDIATE POLITICAL  
PROBLEM OF HOW TO HANDLE THE QUESTION OF THE US ROLE.  
THE PATRIOTIC FRONT HAS A GOOD CASE AGAINST AMERICAN  
COSPONSORSHIP AND HAS MOVED QUICKLY AND PUBLICLY TO  
ATTACK THAT PART OF THE OWEN PLAN. SITHOLE UNDOUBTEDLY  
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PAGE 02 LONDON 06658 02 OF 02 251541Z

BELIEVES THAT HE CANNOT AFFORD A MORE MODERATE POSITION ON THE ISSUE. STILL, THE DISCUSSION REVEALED THAT HIS OBJECTIONS ARE NOT TO AMERICAN ENDORSEMENT OF THE CONFERENCE OR EVEN TO MAJOR AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT. IT IS THE IMAGE OF AMERICAN "CO-CHAIRMANSHIP" THAT HE FINDS OBJECTIONABLE AND POLITICALLY UNWISE.

8. WHILE THE TERM "COSPONSORSHIP" REMAINS USEFULLY VAGUE FOR THE MOMENT, IT IS RAPIDLY BECOMING ONE OF THOSE POLITICAL BUZZ WORDS THAT SHOULD BE DROPPED FROM THE RHODESIAN VOCABULARY.

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## Message Attributes

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**TAGS:** PFOR, PDEV, RH, UK, US, (SITHOLE, NDABANINGI)  
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